

**'B-S' PATROL': SENS. BUMPERS AND SASSER WISH AWAY BALLISTIC
MISSILE THREAT, PROPOSE TO LEAVE U.S. VULNERABLE TO IT**

(Washington, D.C.): According to Senators Dale Bumpers (D-AR) and Jim Sasser (D-TN), the appropriate time to invest in a fire department is when you are facing a raging flash-fire. This at least appears to be the logic of the stance they adopted in the course of a recent Senate debate on a Bumpers-Sasser legislative assault on the U.S. strategic defense program.

On 7 August, Sens. Bumpers and Sasser offered an amendment to the FY1993 Defense authorization bill which would slash a further \$1 billion from the President's request for the Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) system. Taken together with the \$1.1 billion already deducted from the request by the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Senators' amendment would have the effect of eliminating fully 37% of the funding associated with work on strategic defenses in the next fiscal year. In the words of Amb. Henry Cooper, the director of the Strategic Defense Initiative Organization, this would "fundamentally destroy" the core of the GPALS program, effectively terminating its ability to produce deployable defenses in the near-term.

With Friends Like These...

The two Senators relied upon statements by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff William Crowe and the current Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Robert Gates, to stake their claim that "we have run out of enemies" and, therefore, that spending can be dramatically reduced on strategic anti-missile systems, in particular, and on defense, in general. For example, they quoted Adm. Crowe as saying:

"At some point near the end of the first decade of the next century, we *might* be vulnerable to attack by Israel, Brazil, and India. Although attack from those quarters seems highly unlikely, in essence, I believe the threat case has been stretched to the limit by some rather fanciful scenarios. It is time to return to sanity.

"The critical point is that the defense budget is close to a zero-sum game, and money which funds SDI will come from programs which buy *good* defense against *more plausible and likely* threats. Given the nation's pressing domestic agenda the whole subject should be reviewed....In any event, I would argue for a throttled-back effort which seems to accord more with both economic and military reality, perhaps in the neighborhood of \$2 billion annually to keep the program moving and our knowledge ahead of competitors."

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¹ This *Decision Brief* is the first in a series examining the various untenable arguments offered by Sens. Dale Bumpers and Jim Sasser to justify an amendment that would gut the Global Protection Against Limited Strikes program.

Also quoted approvingly was an assessment offered on 15 January 1992 by CIA Director Gates to the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee:

"We do not expect increased risk to U.S. territory from the special weapons of other countries -- in a conventional military sense -- for at least another decade."

Another amendment co-sponsor, Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI) drew the intended conclusion:

"Why rush [to deploy strategic defenses]? The only reason is if we expect threats to develop soon that SDI could actually protect against. But we do not. We are facing very different threats after the Cold War, and SDI is only designed to address one of them -- limited ballistic missile attack. Even if SDI works, it gives us no protection against other means of delivering weapons of mass destruction -- cruise missiles, planes, boats, even backpacks."

The Perils of Selective Citations

Interestingly, the Senators neglected to mention several other statements by Director Gates -- statements that seriously undermine their contention that comprehensive, cost-effective ballistic missile defenses, like the Brilliant Pebbles program (which is slated for evisceration under the Bumpers-Sasser proposal), are not needed now. Particularly noteworthy was Mr. Gates' response to a question from Sen. John Glenn: "[W]e do anticipate that at least some [Third World ballistic missiles] will have the capability of reaching the United States by the end of the decade."

Such a grim state of affairs could be the consequence of several developments now underway -- or in prospect:

- o Russian sales of SS-25 (or other) boosters as space-launch vehicles;
- o Chinese sales of ICBMs to Third World countries;
- o new nuclear nations in the former Soviet Union; and
- o the proliferation of inherently dual-capable space- launch systems.

A Buyer's Market

In fact, U.S. intelligence reportedly believes that **at least 15 Third World countries already have significant ballistic missile programs, and 24 or more Third World countries may acquire them within the next eight years.**

More frightening still, by the beginning of the next decade, three (and possibly more) Third World countries may have missiles with ranges of up to 5,500 km -- capable of striking anywhere in Europe from the Mid-East. Such a development could spell the end of coalition-based responses to threats in the latter region like that utilized in Desert Storm and Operation Southern Watch.

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What is more, the proliferation of *biological, chemical and nuclear weapons* with which such missiles might be equipped is proceeding apace. By 2000, eight Third World countries with missile programs -- including such pariah states as North Korea, Iran and Syria -- could have either nuclear weapons capability or an advanced nuclear weapons program. **Even highly inaccurate missiles could pose a terrifying threat if equipped with such weapons of mass destruction.**

The breakup of the Soviet Union has merely exacerbated these problems. Scientists and technology associated with weapons of mass destruction and the ballistic missile systems by which they can be delivered are now available on the international market. **Under these circumstances, it is only prudent to expect that *more* nations will be able to threaten U.S. citizens, interests and allies with these weapons *sooner* than is currently anticipated.**

Unforgiving Lead-times

Tragically, thanks in no small measure to the earlier budgetary and legislative machinations of people like Senators Bumpers and Sasser, the United States finds itself already seriously "behind the power curve" in responding to this threat. As a practical matter, even if it were to make a *crash* effort to deploy effective strategic missile defenses -- i.e., one involving a program far more risk-intensive and costly than that proposed by the Bush Administration -- the nation probably could not have a competent ABM system in place as soon as it is likely to be needed.

The Center for Security Policy believes that in light of the aforementioned *real and identified dangers* that **it is unconscionable, however, for the U.S. not to proceed at least as aggressively as the Administration has recommended** so as to minimize the period and the magnitude of America's vulnerability. As Gen. John Pietrowski, a former Commander of U.S. Space Command and a distinguished member of the Center's Board of Advisors recently observed, we have already had a salutary warning of the potentially enormous costs of remaining vulnerable to missile attack:

"The only thing Saddam Hussein really hurt us with [in the Gulf war] were ballistic missiles -- notwithstanding his immense conventional arsenal. This was a lesson that was not lost on lots of other countries around the world."

The Bottom Line

In light of the real -- and worsening -- nature of the ballistic missile threat and the unduly long time it will take to correct U.S. vulnerability to that threat, **the Center urges the Senate to defeat the Bumpers-Sasser amendment when a final vote on it is called for after Labor Day.**